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CHICKEN LICE

How To Control Them

Leaflet No. 474

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

CHICKEN LICE:

How To Control Them

Lice irritate chickens, and sometimes kill them. They cause the birds to lose weight. Heavy infestations of lice may reduce egg production as much as 10 to 20 percent.

You can control chicken lice by applying insecticide to the birds and to the interiors of chickenhouses.

KINDS OF LICE

Two kinds of lice—bloodsucking and biting—attack animals. Only biting lice attack chickens. The head louse (*Cuclotogaster heterographus*) and the three body lice (*Menacanthus stramineus*, *M. cornutus*, and *M. pallidulus*) are the most common species. The head louse is especially injurious to young birds, and is more difficult to control.

Other biting lice that attack chickens include the following:

Shaft louse (*Menopon gallinae*)

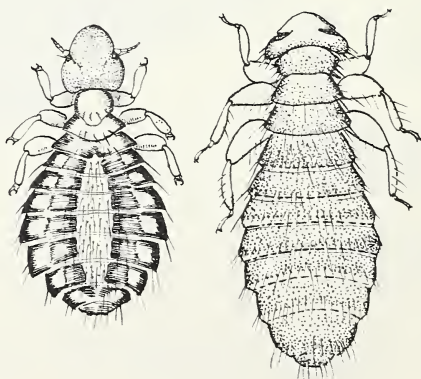
Wing louse (*Lipeurus caponis*)

Fluff louse (*Goniocotes gallinae*)

Large chicken louse (*Goniodes gigas*)

Brown chicken louse (*Goniodes dissimilis*)

The methods outlined in this leaflet for control of lice on chickens are effective against all these lice.



Head louse.

A body louse.



PN-794

Parting a chicken's feathers to find lice.

DEVELOPMENT

Female lice lay their eggs on a chicken's feathers. A gluey substance holds the eggs in place. They hatch in a few days to 2 weeks.

A newly hatched louse is transparent. As it grows, it molts (sheds its skin) several times, and color comes to its body. It is full grown 2 weeks after hatching.

Adult lice vary in shape and size, according to species. They feed on parts of the feathers and on scales of the skin.

CONTROL

Inspect your flock regularly. Apply an insecticide if the birds are infested with lice.

Several insecticides are effective for delousing chickens. Some can be applied as roost paints; others as sprays, dusts, or dips.

Treating the Birds

When spraying or dusting chickens on wire, apply the insecticide both over the backs and from beneath to insure effective penetration and coverage. Spray or dust at night when the birds are quiet.

Spraying

Spray the chickens individually or in groups. Use a spray containing 0.5 percent of malathion, 0.5 percent of Rabon, or 0.25 percent of

coumaphos. To prepare the spray, purchase an emulsifiable concentrate or wettable powder and mix it with water. Directions on the label will tell you how to attain the desired strength.

Use a garden sprayer or power sprayer to apply malathion, Rabon, or coumaphos.

One gallon of spray should be enough to treat about 100 chickens. Do not use coumaphos more often than once a week, or Rabon more often than every 14 days. Do not use coumaphos spray on birds within 10 days of vaccination or other stress influence.

Dusting

Recommended dusts and their strengths are: malathion, 4 or 5 percent; or coumaphos, 0.5 percent. Dusts are ready to use when purchased.

You can apply one of these dusts with a shaker can when dusting birds individually. Shake dust into feathers of each bird until the dust reaches the skin.

Use a plunger- or rotary-type hand duster on the entire flock. One pound of dust should treat 100 chickens.

Do not use coumaphos more often than once a week. Do not use coumaphos dust on birds within 10 days of vaccination or other stress influence.

Dipping

Chickens may be treated in a dip containing 0.5 percent of malathion. Prepare the dip by mixing an emulsifiable concentrate or wettable powder in water. Directions on the label will tell you how to attain the desired strength.

Dip only on warm days and wear rubber gloves.

Treat each bird separately, as follows:

1. Hold wings over its back, using one hand.
2. Immerse the bird.
3. Remove bird from the dip, allowing excess dip to drain off. Keep each bird in the dip 20 to 30 seconds.

Treating Roosts and Chickenhouse

You can spray, dust, or paint insecticide on roosts and other parts of the chickenhouse.



PN-796

Dusting the birds.



PN-795

Spraying the birds.

Spraying

Use one of the following: an oil solution or water suspension or emulsion containing 1 percent of malathion; or 0.25 percent of coumaphos; or an emulsion or water suspension containing 1 percent of Rabon.

Mix according to directions on the insecticide container.

Apply sprays with a small power sprayer or a garden-type compressed-air sprayer. Spray

PN-797
**Spraying
interior of
chickenhouse.**



thoroughly on roosts and other parts of the chickenhouse.

Painting

Prepare a painting solution by mixing insecticide with kerosene, diesel oil, or water. Use a mixture containing 3 percent of malathion or 1 percent of Rabon. Follow directions on the insecticide container.

Apply with a brush to roosts and other interior parts of the chickenhouse. One pint of the mixture should cover about 150 feet of roost.

Dusting

Use a 4- or 5-percent malathion dust, a 0.5-percent coumaphos dust, or a 3 percent Rabon dust to treat litter and roosts. One pound of malathion dust or coumaphos dust will treat about 40 square feet of litter. One pound of Rabon dust will treat 100 square feet.

PRECAUTIONS

Pesticides used improperly can be injurious to man, animals, and plants. Follow the directions and heed all precautions on the labels.

Store pesticides in original containers under lock and key—out of the reach of children and animals—and away from food and feed.

Apply pesticides so that they do not endanger humans, livestock, crops, beneficial insects, fish, and wildlife, or in ways that may



PN-798

**Painting the
roosts.**

contaminate water or leave illegal residues.

Avoid prolonged inhalation of pesticide sprays or dusts; wear protective clothing and equipment if specified on the container.

If your hands become contaminated with a pesticide, do not eat or drink until you have washed. In case a pesticide is swallowed or gets in the eyes, follow the first aid treatment given on the label, and get prompt medical attention. If a pesticide is spilled on your skin or clothing, remove clothing immediately and wash skin thoroughly.

Do not clean spray equipment or dump excess spray material near ponds, streams, or wells.

Dispose of empty pesticide containers promptly. Have them buried at a sanitary land-fill dump, or crush and bury them in a level, isolated place.

NOTE: Some States have restrictions on the use of certain pesticides. Check your State and local regulations.

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FOLLOW THE LABEL
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